

Consumer Council News

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National DMDA Conference

New Programs

The Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act made \$15 million available for new specialized PTSD and Substance Use Disorder (SUD) treatment programs. Due to the loss of capacity for specialized Substance Use Disorder \$9.5 million was given for new programs and \$5.5 to PTSD programs. Out of 108 proposals received for SUD 31 were funded. There were 17 PTSD programs funded. These programs will improve services that

The National Depressive and Manic-Depressive Association (NDMDA) recently had their annual meeting August 17-19, 2001. This is a grassroots organization with 400 chapters and support groups. They are guided by a 65-member Scientific Advisory Board composed of the leading researchers and clinicians in the field of mood disorders. It was evident at the annual meeting that there is a partnership between the consumers and the physicians that provide them with assistance for their mental health. The latest research was highlighted and sessions focused on doctor and consumer exchange of information and ideas. The findings in brain research have moved treatment approaches ahead with new

medicines and psychosocial approaches to care for a person with a mood disorder. The mission of NDMDA is unique in that it not only emphasizes education of those with a mood disorder, their family and the public but fosters the partnership between the physicians doing research and the consumer. Recently they completed a national survey on attitudes and experiences with depression and its treatment in the primary care setting. The survey revealed significant communication gaps between primary care doctors and patients. For information

contact www.ndmda.org or call (800)826-3632.



Our Own Voice

Our Own Voice is an older adult consumer mental health alliance that advocates for older persons with mental health needs. The focus is on mental health issues related to persons 60 years of age and older but there are no age restrictions for membership. Their purpose is to advocate for enhancement of and improvement in accessible high quality specialized mental health services for older adults. The population aged 60 and older is this country's fastest growing age group. It is projected that it will represent 25 percent by the year 2020. Some of the concerns are:

- ⇒ 10 to 28 percent of this population have mental health problems that warrant professional intervention.

- ⇒ 10-15% of older people have clinically significant depression
- ⇒ 2-3% are diagnosed with Major Affective Disorder or Bipolar Depression.
- ⇒ Suicide occurs at the rate of 18.1 per 100,000 for persons ages 65 to 74 compared with 13.6 per 100,000 for persons 15 to 24.

This group was started as a consumer group working with local and state coalition that were working towards improving the availability and quality of mental health services to older adults. These coalition have been helped by grants from Center for Mental Health and AARP. For information contact

Newsletter sponsored by
VA Mental Health
Consumer Council
FAX comments to
Lucia Freedman at
703-748-0475 or call 202-
273-8370

American Legion-Teamed for Health

The American Legion has initiated a program "Teamed for Health : Provider and Patient Education Campaign". The program is focused on keeping veterans healthy. The goal is to make information available to providers, veterans and veteran's families. The major health areas are:

- ⇒ Cardiovascular and Metabolic
- ⇒ Neurological
- ⇒ Mental Health
- ⇒ Oncology
- ⇒ Pulmonary
- ⇒ Rheumatology
- ⇒ Infectious Disease

The ways in which the American Legion would try to help veterans are:

- * Empower veterans through education and awareness campaigns
- * teach veterans tools for healthy living and

physical fitness

- * Promote prevention and healthy lifestyle choices
- * Encourage diet, exercise ,medication compliance
- * Identify high risk populations(i.e. stroke,dementia)
- * Promote national guidelines for VA treatment-critical pathways
- * Promote awareness of VA and other research findings
- * Send out their ratings of VA Care in their VALUE report to users and providers

The American Legion hopes to accomplish this through running articles on health and fitness as well as VA research findings in magazines. They will do Press Releases on health and fitness and post information on their web homepage (www.legion.org). The Legion would also conduct training and other informational seminars.

Senate Veterans Affairs Committee Changes

Senator John D. Rockefeller has assumed the chairmanship of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee which was shifted to the Democrats when Vermont Senator James Jeffords resigned from the Republican Party in June. Senator Rockefeller stated his priorities will be quality health care services, improving benefits claims systems and increasing the VA budget so that there is sufficient funding to improve services. He has championed issues such as increasing the budget for veterans' health care;extending benefits past the age of 65 for dependents of disabled and deceased veterans and promoting equitable health care services across the nation. The Senator is expected to press for more active oversight of the Department of Veterans Affairs to

ensure that it implements the long-term care and emergency care coverage for veterans. In 1999, Senator Rockefeller successfully led efforts to win legislation requiring the VA to provide mandatory nursing home care to severely disabled veterans and non-institutional long-term care services to all veterans and to ensure that veterans have access to emergency care services in non-VA facilities when necessary. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony Principi has emphasized his commitment to working not only with Congress but also the groups that advocate for veterans. He recently announced regional liaisons who will work with state and local veterans service organizations as he sees them as partners in developing solutions to the many issues facing

Information and Resources

World Mental Health Day
October 10, 2001
International event to promote and educate mental health topics.
www.wfmh.com